REMARKS

This is intended as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated May 26, 2006, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on August 26, 2006. Please reconsider the claims pending in the application for reasons discussed below.

Claims 1-16 are pending in the application. Claims 1-5, 7-11 and 14-16 remain pending following entry of this response. Claims 6, 12 and 13 have been canceled. Claims 1-5, 7-11 and 14-16 have been amended. Applicants submit that the amendments do not introduce new matter.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Applicants submit that appropriate corrections have been made. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn and the claims be allowed.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine the reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Third, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. *See* M.P.E.P § 2143. In the present case, the references do not teach or suggest all the claim limitations.

Claims 1 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Ayyadurai* (USP 6,668,281). Respectfully, Applicants submit that *Ayyadurai* does not teach or suggest a method for deleting automatic delegate reply messages,

including receiving a delegate reply message automatically generated and sent by a recipient terminal in response to an electronic mail message sent to the recipient terminal; opening the delegate reply message; deleting the opened delegate reply message; and in response to deleting the opened delegate reply message: (i) identifying a mail message identifier of the opened delegate reply message; and (ii) deleting other delegate reply messages provided in response to the same electronic mail message if the other delegate reply messages have the same mail message identifier as the opened delegate reply message. Therefore, the claims are believed to be allowable, and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-14 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Ayyadurai* in view of *Hall* (USP 6,915,334). Regarding claims 2 and 16, these are dependents from claims 1 and 15, respectively. Accordingly, for the reasons give above with respect to claims 1 and 15 claims 2 and 16 are also allowable. Further, regarding claims 3-14, Applicants submit that *Ayyadurai* in view of *Hall* does not teach or suggest a method for automatically deleting one or more related delegate reply messages including (a) transmitting an electronic mail message to at least one recipient; (b) receiving a first delegate reply message provided in response to the electronic mail message; (c) identifying a second delegate reply message as being related to the first delegate reply message; and wherein each of the delegate reply messages are auto-reply messages responsive to the electronic mail message; and (d) automatically deleting the second delegate reply message on the basis of the identified relationship. Therefore, the claims are believed to be allowable, and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Having addressed all issues set out in the office action, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that the claims be allowed.

Respectfully submitted, and
S-signed pursuant to 37 CFR 1.4,

/Gero G. McClellan, Reg. No. 44,227/
Gero G. McClellan
Registration No. 44,227
PATTERSON & SHERIDAN, L.L.P.
3040 Post Oak Blvd. Suite 1500
Houston, TX 77056
Telephone: (713) 623-4844
Facsimile: (713) 623-4846
Attorney for Applicant(s)